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COUNTER-INSURGENCY: VIET-NAM 1962-1963

James Farmer

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## COUNTER-INSURGENCY: VIET-NAM 1962-1963

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SUMMARY

This paper describes the political and economic motivating forces in Viet-Nam, the strategic hamlet program, the government organization, and briefly describes the U.S. advisory efforts. It discusses counter-insurgency, particularly the effects on weapons selectivity, the defense, transportation, communication, and offense. Examples from recent experiences in Viet-Nam are given. Patrolling and Viet-Cong responses to U.S. equipment and tactics are described, as is the role of American technology in counter-insurgency.

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This is the edited transcript of a presentation to an U.S. Air Force audience on 24 May 1963 at Inglewood, California. Some material has been added to the text to include subjects covered during the question period. Some sections have been deleted so the paper will be unclassified.

This is not a report of organized RAND research, but rather is personal opinion and observations from field work in Viet-Nam and previous work in counter-insurgency and limited war.

## INTRODUCTION

Gentlemen, it is a pleasure to be invited to discuss counter-insurgency and Viet-Nam with you today. Before we begin, however, I want to point out that I am speaking to you not as a member of the U.S. Army Reserve nor as a RAND scientist describing published research. Rather I am speaking as a civilian who lived in Viet-Nam six months, and who had contact with Vietnamese officials, Vietnamese officers, French business men, and U.S. advisors. Six months is a short time, even when you can speak the native language.

## FIVE MOTIVATING FORCES

There are five motivating forces to the Vietnamese people and their government which I consider important and which in some way explain their actions.

The first is their desire to "win" independence. Viet-Nam has a long history of struggling for independence: From the Chinese, from the Japanese, from the French, and now from the Viet-Cong. Having now come so close to independence they are proud of their struggle and are not eager to have the appearance of colonialism. It is this spirit which prompts Councilor Nhu, the president's brother, to ask that the number of Americans be reduced. It is this spirit plus an outstanding record of success in jungle war--these are the same men who humbled the elite of the French army--that sometimes causes resentment at U.S. demands.

The second force is what I call "war weariness." The Vietnamese have been in a constant struggle since the Japanese occupied their

country during World War II. Many of the reserve officers have been in service for 10 to 15 years--many continually on hazardous missions. High school students now do not want to finish because when they do, they face an interminable period of active duty where Army officers are a prime target for assassination. Each year thirty thousand Vietnamese become casualties: few families have escaped the sorrow of loved ones killed by the Viet-Cong. So long as the situation shows the Diem government winning, the Vietnamese people will support the battle--and there are signs of increasing support of the government by the peasants. However, should the Diem government have a period of setbacks, I feel that "war weariness" may exceed the people's desire for independence. "War weariness" is now latent, but potentially a powerful force which must be considered.

The third force is one we can see in any underdeveloped country--the desire for a higher standard of living. The Viet-Cong propaganda constantly proclaims the economic advantages that will accrue when the Viet-Cong replace the American-sponsored Diem government. The desire for an increased standard of living comes from this propaganda, from increasing communication with the outside world--magazines, radio broadcasts, and for the peasant who comes to town, an occasional movie, and from observing the French colonials and the American families and servicemen living in Viet-Nam. The inevitable results of mass American influence can be seen--there is a community of American ranch style homes near Saigon, the finest apartments and hotels in Saigon have become American BOQs, big American autos now flood the narrow streets, and the gush of green American dollars has invaded the market place.

Having seen such products, can we not understand why there is desire for something better than a grass hut, a few yards of cloth, and a bag of rice? For the peasant and the urban poor, who can only see the affluence of the Americans, there is little difference between the French colonials and the American advisors.

The fourth force, a potent one, is Ngo family's desire to found a dynasty. There are three members of the Ngo family in the most powerful positions in the government: Ngo-Dinh-Diem, the president; Ngo-Dinh-Nhu, the president's political advisor; and Madame Nhu, Mr. Nhu's wife and the president's official hostess. Ngo-Dinh-Diem is, as modern presidents go, a distant man--a man who feels responsible for his people as a father and who is also their philosopher. He has taken an oath of celibacy and dedicated his life to leading his people. Mr. Nhu is probably the most powerful man in Viet-Nam. Unofficially all of the departments report to him and his word is regarded as final by all of the officials. The man is brilliant, tireless, and cunning. His wife is powerful as evidenced by her leadership of the women's organizations and her role in legislating family life. She recognizes the Western influence on the Oriental family and is trying, by legislation, to retain the authoritarian family, preferably a matriarchal one. Exactly how much her influence extends to other aspects of the government is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain.

There is no question in my mind, however, but that the Ngo family intends to stay in power. Throughout the country you see signs which roughly translated say, "The Ngo family for 1,000 years." The American press has been particularly critical of the Diem regime, primarily

for not extending democracy. As a result, Newsweek has been banned on occasion and correspondents requested to leave. This issue has been particularly irritating to the Diem government. President Diem feels that he is helping his people by leading them in the honored Mandarin tradition. He cannot understand the American's preoccupation with extending democracy before the country is secure. Furthermore, most Vietnamese feel that the anti-Diem revolt in November 1960 was sponsored by the American government. Obviously the Diem government cannot have complete confidence in the U.S. advisors. On the other hand neither can the Diem government yet become independent of U.S. support.

I feel that the Diem government expects to lose American support sometime during this effort. President Diem is fully determined to continue his fight against the Viet-Cong after the U.S. leaves. For this reason, some of the supplies flowing into Viet-Nam are being hoarded for that day. While Americans most often think of our unwavering support of Berlin and the Berlin airlift of 1948, the Diem government is more acutely aware of our 1952 policy of "complete support" of the French government against the Viet-Minh, our efforts to free North Korea, and more recently the Kennedy pronouncements of our resolve to support a free and independent Laos.

The fifth force is the clash of Western and Vietnamese culture. When Vietnamese students attend French schools and when there are 20,000 Americans in a country the size of Viet-Nam, there is bound to be an influx of Western culture, and more precisely, of American culture. World travelers are aware that "rock and roll" can be heard in



any country, that blue jeans are in hot demand, and American cigarettes are a universal currency. People in the larger urban areas, such as Saigon, Chợ-Lớn, and Huế, can see American and French movies, and have daily contact with the French businessmen and American military personnel. The results are inevitable--they have been in every country --the younger people emulate the Americans. The impact in Europe was tempered by the high state of development of the European countries. In Japan the impact was tempered by the policies of General MacArthur and by the economy's extraordinarily rapid growth. In Viet-Nam there are two problems: (1) The country is at war and the economy cannot supply the consumer goods demanded by a Westernized culture, (2) The family unit is stronger than in other countries having direct American influence, and Madame Nhu feels it necessary to prevent the disintegration of this Vietnamese family unit.

The traditional Vietnamese family is quite authoritarian--the eldest male is absolute ruler. This is quite a contrast to the independent American teen-ager, particularly as portrayed by Hollywood. Madame Nhu enunciated her views on the family last year at an international conference in Switzerland. Her legislation forbids dancing, cracks down on prostitution, requires the wife's approval for a husband to travel, forbids divorce, and requires the wife's approval for separation. The Vietnamese girls are encouraged to wear the traditional ao-dai instead of Western dresses and smoking is discouraged. There are many other pressures--through law or more subtly, to stop the "Americanization" of the Vietnamese youth. She has initiated organizations of women and her Republican Youth girls sport bright blue uniforms and new U.S. carbines. Our purpose is not to discuss this

sociological phenomenon, but rather to recognize that a change is taking place, that the government disapproves of the change, and that the effects can seriously degrade the U.S. advisory effort. It is a situation which requires understanding on our part and a conscious effort to avoid aggravating the change.

#### THE STRATEGIC HAMLET PROGRAM

The strategic hamlet program is a development of a similar program in Malaya and the earlier agrovillage program in Viet-Nam. The peasants have traditionally lived on their plots of ground, farming and only occasionally going to the village market. With this distribution of people it has been difficult to extend government control to these people or to defend them from Viet-Cong attack. The strategic hamlet program attempts to relocate these people into small defended areas. The symbol of the strategic hamlet program is the moat and bamboo spike covered parapet which surrounds each hamlet. The purpose of the strategic hamlet program has been three-fold. First, the Viet-Cong now have to attack a defended hamlet--a direct attack on the people themselves. The Viet-Cong are faced with a dilemma. Their propaganda proclaims they are "fighting for the people." How can they be "fighting for the people" if they attack a strategic hamlet? Second, because the people are close together government is possible. The Vietnamese government hopes to extend government organization to these low levels, to gain some measure of control, and to use this organization as a vehicle for the government information program. Third, the government promises certain increases in the standard of living as a reward to the peasants for giving up their old homes

and now living some distance from their fields. This includes medical care, education, assistance with the agricultural program, and an improved market for their goods.

This program holds some promise for eventual victory in Viet-Nam. The Viet-Cong have not yet found any really successful counter to the program. Many of the direct attacks on the strategic hamlets have failed. The early discontent caused by moving the peasants is being overcome by the efforts of the civic action teams.

#### GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION

Chart 1 shows the general organization of the Vietnamese government. Mr. Nhu and Madame Nhu hold no official "line authority," but as I indicated before both are extremely powerful in the government. The Ministry of Interior is responsible for the 41 provinces. Each of the provinces, similar to our states, is headed by an appointed province chief. In two or three cases this man is a civilian; usually an Army officer is province chief. These men are generally young, eager, and enthusiastic supporters of the policies of the Diem government. As an example, Darlac province is headed by a 26 year old Vietnamese major. This man is responsible for the civil government and for all military activities in his province. He, like the other province chiefs, is a "comer" in the military and should graduate to a position on the Joint General Staff.

The district chiefs are also generally military men--captains. These are choice positions for military men. They have heavy responsibilities--the security of the district, administration of the district government, and supervision of the villages, but they are general-

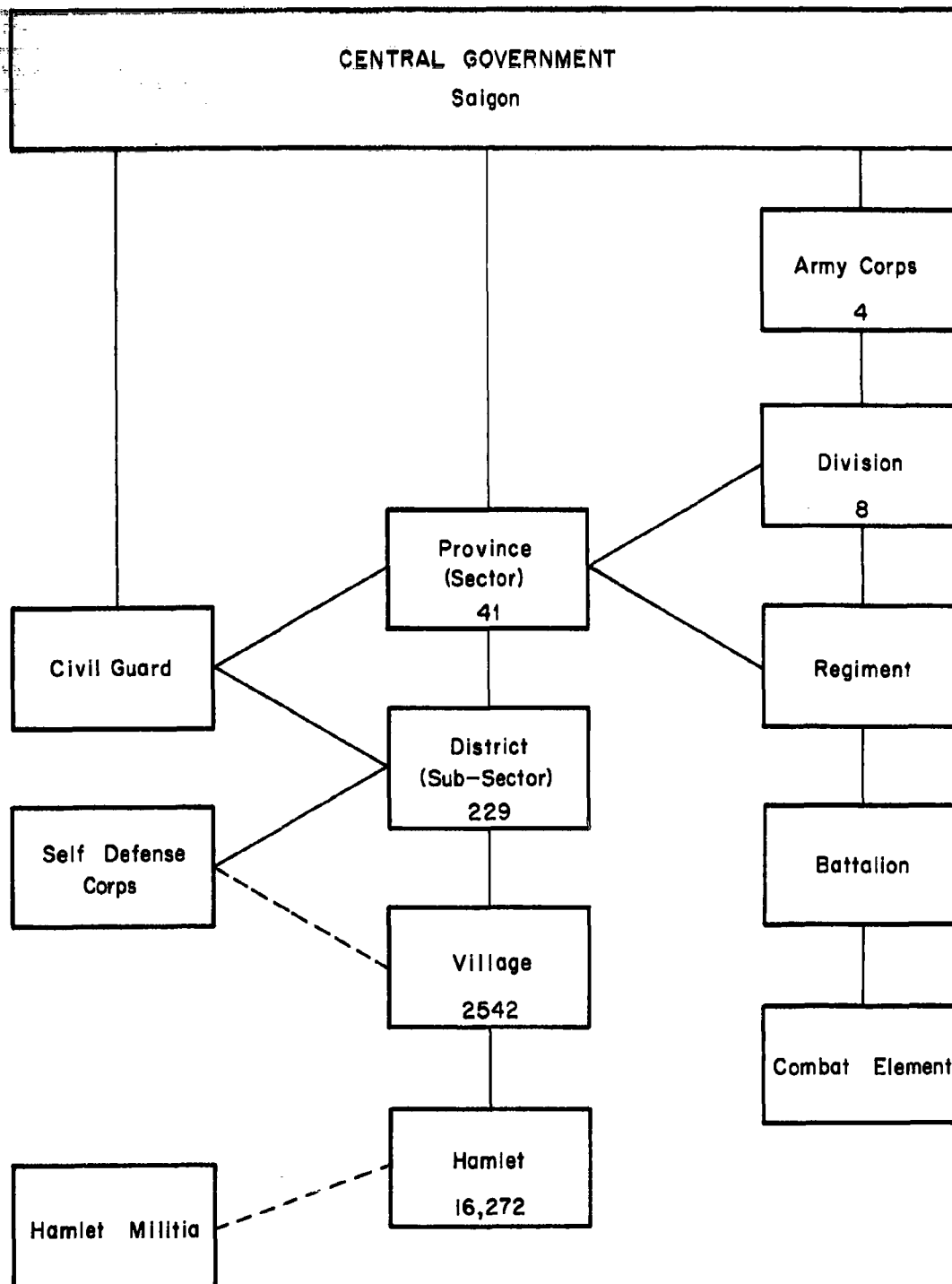


Chart 1—Government organization

ly rewarded by occupying the homes of the former French district officials and have a retinue of servants. Because these men have direct contact with the village chiefs and people of the district, they are key men in the success or failure of any program.

The village chief is elected or appointed and is responsible for an area of the district, operating the village market, and government of the hamlets. This man is paid an extremely small salary. Whereas the district chief was probably a high school graduate and trained in the U.S. or France, the village chief may not be able to read or write and in any case has had limited training and education.

The Civil Guard is roughly equivalent to a mobilized national guard. These forces are supposed to be assigned to the province chief. They are to be used to relieve the Army of some of the burden of large static defense and to provide the province chief with some mobile defensive and offensive capability.

The Self Defense Corps is formed from people living and working in the area. They were to be used only in the home area of the SDC men, who must also work in the fields. A few units have been organized, trained and equipped with weapons. Some have been equipped only with primitive weapons such as clubs and spears.

The hamlet militia is assigned the responsibility of hamlet defense. It is made up of hamlet citizens who take on this task as an additional duty to their customary occupation, generally farming.

In some cases both the Civil Guard and SDC have participated with the Army in large sweep operations. This seems, to me at least, not to be the purpose for which they were organized. On the other hand, in some

provinces, particularly "show provinces," the Civil Guard undertakes most of the military action in the province and the SDC mans most of the defensive positions.

The Army has geographical responsibility--the Air Force and Navy do not. The Army is divided into four corps areas. These corps are subordinate to the Joint General Staff. Each corps area is divided into division areas. The division, generally headed by a general or colonel, is responsible for an area encompassing several provinces. The province chief is responsible for military action in his province and the division commander is responsible for military action in several provinces. Although the division commander outranks the province chief, the province chiefs are handpicked by President Diem and have direct communication with him. Therefore military actions are coordinated between the two men and take on many different forms. Some division commanders merely assign battalions and regiments to the province chief. Others perform military operations throughout the province after coordinating with the province chief.

Much of the patrolling is done by the Army. Patrols range from seven or eight men to battalions. The patrol may last from a few hours to several weeks depending on the terrain and purpose.

In addition to the conventional Army units shown here, there are special units such as the Ranger units, the Airborne brigade, the Marine Corps, and an organization similar to our Special Forces. These units participate in operations throughout the country. Such operations are often planned at the national level and coordinated with follow-up civic action programs.

### THE U.S. ADVISORY EFFORTS

There are two advisory organizations in Viet-Nam. One is the U.S. Operations Mission (USOM), a part of the Agency for International Development (AID), which administers the aid program to the civil government. The second is the U.S. Military Assistance Command, Viet-Nam (MACV) and its limited partner, the Military Assistance Advisory Group, Viet-Nam (MAAG). They administer the Military Assistance Program (MAP) in Viet-Nam.

USOM formerly administered the AID program and had an advisory role only at the top level. For example they advised the Central Telecommunications Service and provided the equipment and money for installation of the civil police net. Now USOM also has advisors at the province level. General Harkins heads MACV which commands all of the U.S. military units in Viet-Nam such as the helicopter units, the 2d Air Division, and the Signal Corps units. MAAG provides the military advisors for military units, Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps; for some para-military organizations like the Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps; and for some military staff organizations of the civil government such as the sector organization (the military counterpart for province) and subsector (for district).

In many cases these advisors have done excellent jobs. One clear example is Major Rupert in Qu<sup>1</sup>ang-Ng<sup>1</sup> province. Not only has he helped organize the military and para-military organizations, but he has pushed the strategic hamlet program, helped civil affairs teams, and in every way served as an example to the Vietnamese people. Qu<sup>1</sup>ang-Ng<sup>1</sup> has traditionally been a Viet-Cong stronghold, but recently when

the Viet-Cong initiated mass attacks against the strategic hamlets and the city itself, the people gave support to the Vietnamese Army. I feel much of this can be credited to Major Rupert's efforts. The man understood his job and loved the people. His jeep and bag of candy for children are well known throughout the province.

Another example is an 18 year old Special Forces soldier from San Diego. He was responsible for the health and training of Montagnards near Banmethuot. He had broken his leg and we were taking him to Saigon for X-rays and a cast. The Montagnards accompanied him to the plane and he entertained them by playing a small portable tape recorder while waiting for the plane to take-off. The people were quite concerned that he was leaving and wondered when he would return. Many of them had been his former patients.

The Vietnamese are experts at guerrilla warfare. They have fought in their country for years. But the knowledgeable advisor still remains the best way of bringing U.S. technology to these people and instructing them in the use of our equipment and techniques. MAAG, painfully aware of the results of an unqualified advisor, is working hard to develop the advisor corps--men who fill an exacting and important role.

#### THE NATURE OF COUNTER-INSURGENCY

We have discussed the political environment in Viet-Nam, the strategic hamlet program, the organization of the Vietnamese effort, and the U.S. advisory effort. Before we turn to more substantive problems, I want to make a few remarks about counter-insurgency. Counter-insurgency is not guerrilla warfare. There is a difference between ambushing a convoy and being ambushed, between sabotaging a



railroad and defending a railroad, and between attacking an outpost and defending an outpost. I mention this difference because we often talk about guerrilla training for counter-insurgency. It is important to understand guerrilla warfare, but counter-insurgency and guerrilla warfare are not the same.

The basic problem in counter-insurgency is defense of small areas or points, and offensive action against the insurgents. Chart 2 shows an area during counter-insurgency. There are areas where the government forces have never been, or rarely invade, called guerrilla strongholds. These are the areas where the guerrillas have hospitals, supply dumps, ammunition factories, and training camps. Should government forces penetrate the area, the guerrillas would probably fight a delaying action. When the government forces swept over the area they would find only a few empty huts. Provisions are made to hide all supplies and sometimes the wounded, and the training camps consist of only a few huts. The guerrillas would flee with their weapons or use prepared hideouts. Such a sweep often yields little.

On the other hand, the government secures, in a true sense, only a few specific areas. This includes urban areas, major transportation and communication routes, military installations, and other key locations. There is not, however, absolute security. Ambushes occur on patrolled highways, attacks and assassinations occur in the urban areas, and military installations may be subject to sabotage or attack, but these events are rare in secured areas. The vast majority of the area falls into a third category, generally under government control during the daytime and under guerrilla control at night. Both government forces

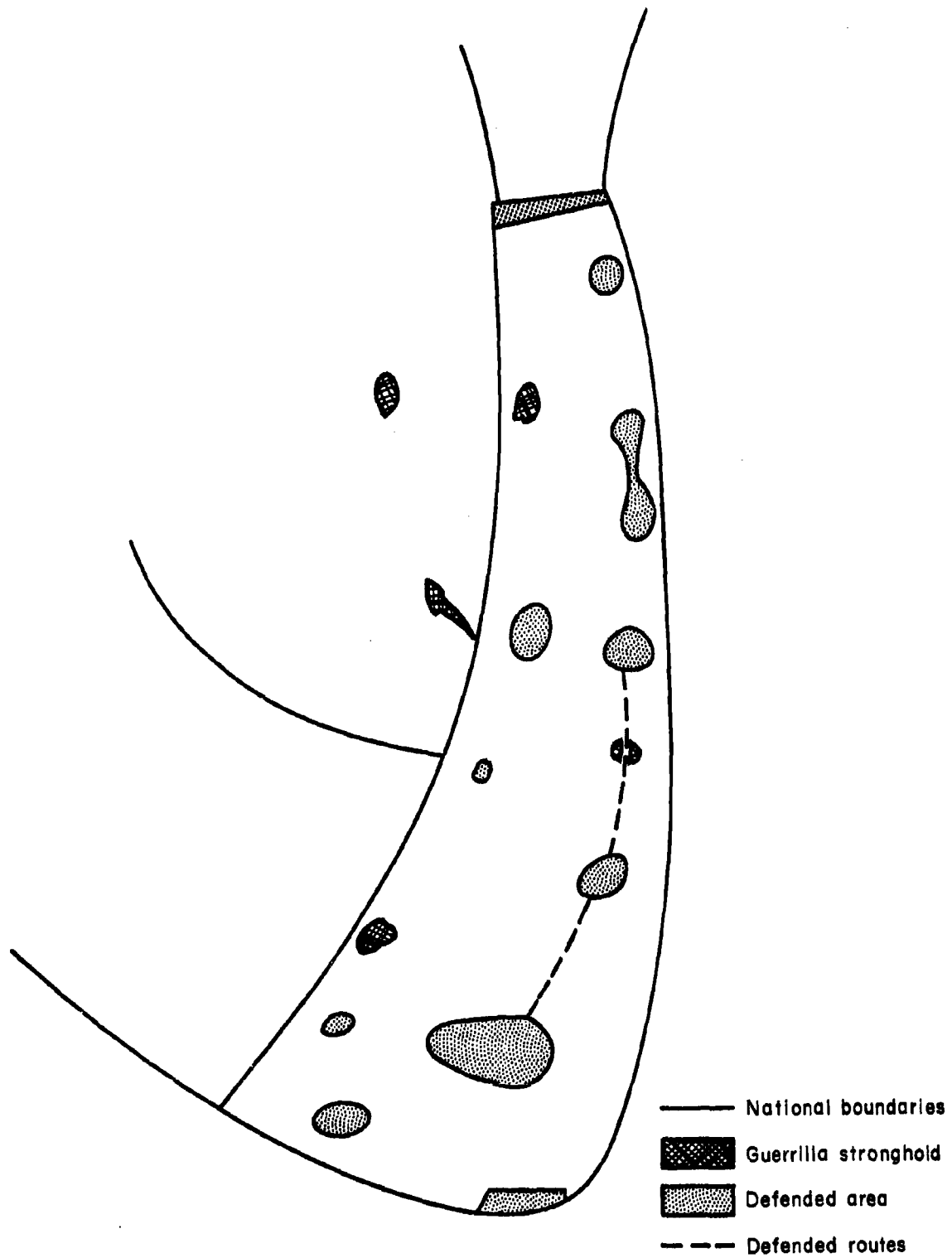


Chart 2—An area during counter-insurgency

and the guerrilla forces have almost unrestrained access to the area for limited periods of time.

This is the environment of counter-insurgency and it presents particular problems with regard to weapons design, tactics, communications, transportation, and defense. I would like to point out the similarity between this environment and the environment conceived by tacticians for tactical nuclear warfare; the concept of defended strong points with a sort of "no-man's land" between. In counter-insurgency, though, you have one additional restraint: innocent civilians should not be harmed. This is a key point since you are asking the support of a population whose relatives may have been innocent victims of your weapons.

#### WEAPONS SELECTIVITY

In evaluating weapons we often consider the number of people killed in some uniformly populated area conveniently located on the "other side" of a line between the two forces. There isn't any clear line in counter-insurgency. No area will always be completely free of guerrillas or of loyal citizens. Weapons must now be evaluated on joint criteria, a high kill probability for the selected target and a low kill probability for the rest of the area. Chart 3 is a heuristic diagram showing kill probability as a function of distance from the target center. An ideal weapon would have a kill probability of 1 out to some distance and a kill probability of 0 everywhere else. Unfortunately many of our weapons have a small kill probability over a large area. An example of high selectivity and low selectivity is shown. In counter-insurgency you need specially designed weapons which

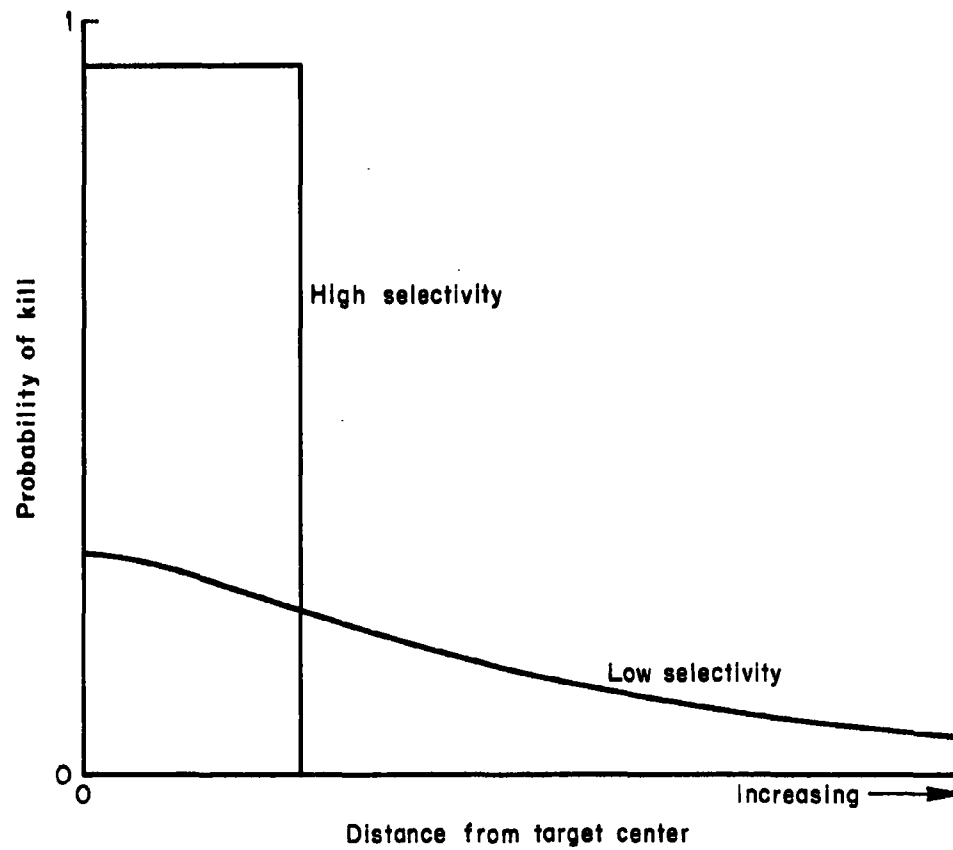


Chart 3 — Weapon selectivity

will give the high selectivity necessary to remain in the politically set limits.

I have not mentioned another problem which must be considered: the accuracy of delivery of the various weapons. Arguments similar to those for selectivity hold; merely substitute accuracy for selectivity in the preceding comments.

The implications for air-delivered weapons are obvious. The weapons must be selective and target marking and delivery must be accurate--certainly more accurate than in conventional warfare.

#### THE DEFENSE

Returning to our diagram of the counter-insurgency environment, Chart 2, we recognize the problems of defense. Many small areas and point targets must be defended. The total defense perimeter, around all of these small areas and points, is extremely large--many times the length of the total border. But because this is insurgency, merely defending a line such as the border is not sufficient. For example, there will be over 100,000 kilometers of strategic hamlet perimeter alone. To relieve their Army from some of this defense task, the Vietnamese have relied on police, hamlet militia, and para-military organizations like the SDC. The Vietnamese economy can sustain an Army of only so many men. The para-military organizations and hamlet provide a defense while retaining some of the economic contribution of the individual who remains at home.

There is another tradeoff in defense. If the defenses are heavily manned there is a concomitant drain on the total manpower available,

but there will be fewer and stronger guerrilla attacks. If the defenses are lightly manned, the guerrillas can wear down the defense by a large number of small attacks. Before a policy of "big offense" is pushed, the results to the defensive posture must be considered.

I might also point out that the Americans are defended by as many as 30,000 to 50,000 able-bodied men. When Mr. Nhu asked for a reduction in the number of Americans in Viet-Nam, he may well be considering the large manpower drain in guarding and supporting the Americans. Even though Viet-Nam is an Asian country, it does not have unlimited manpower resources--manpower must be conserved.

#### TRANSPORTATION

Defending long stretches of road or railroad is costly, in men and money. There is one alternative to defending roads, and one which the U.S. has been indirectly supporting--avoid using the roads. The Americans, particularly the Air Force, have been handling large volumes of air freight and encouraging the use of air transport. The Vietnamese have completely abandoned the use of many highways. For instance, Colonel Shirley, who headed the operations research effort in the Malayan campaign, told me his trip to Banmethuot was the first military convoy over National 14 since 1958. This, of course, reduces ambushes: no convoys, no ambushes. Viet-Nam is fortunate since most of its population lives near the coast and much of the freight can be moved by ship. Military cargo can be handled by the Navy's fleet of landing craft.

Air support is fine, but unlimited use of air transport may cause the government to give up control of the land routes. The

civilians then have no other choice than to use Viet-Cong controlled highways.

Although the U.S. is doing an excellent job in flying freight from one airfield to another, the problem of supporting outposts or jungle patrols is more difficult. Outposts are small and difficult targets to hit, either by free-fall techniques or with unguided parachutes. Jungle patrols are hard to find, much less to hit.

Here I must cite an example of Vietnamese ingenuity. The problem was to provide fresh meat to outposts. There is no refrigeration, and the cargo may be left several days before the weather breaks up in the valleys. So the Vietnamese stock live cattle, which are free-falled from several hundred feet. The cow steps out of the C-47 alive, but is hamburger upon arrival. No refrigeration required.

When we discuss air dropping supplies, we must also mention the problem of navigation. The people on the ground don't know where they are, and the air navigation aids are not sufficiently accurate to permit air drops during marginal weather. There was discussion, however, of installing sufficiently accurate navigational means to meet this need.

#### COMMUNICATION

Since the guerrillas have almost unrestrained access to most of the area, particularly at night, wire communications cannot be used. The high atmospheric noise level and poor design of the AN/GRC-9 and obsolete SCR-188 furnished the Vietnamese prevent voice communication.

HF manual Morse has been less than reliable, primarily because of poor installations and lack of knowledge about vertical incidence ionospheric reflection. The gaps between the areas are often long enough to preclude VHF radio relay communication. However, because of the population density of the delta country and coastal strip, most of these areas can be reached with VHF radio relay. The UHF troposcatter system now connects the three major areas served by VHF radio relay.

The bulk of the communication still depends on HF radio, and unfortunately this means is least reliable just when it is needed: from around midnight through the early morning hours. This is also the period of peak Viet-Cong activity. I am not saying that the Viet-Cong activity peaks because of communications unreliability. I am saying that the communications reliability must be increased during these hours if we plan on effectively countering Viet-Cong attacks. Reinforcement requires communication as well as transportation. Helicopters do no good if the message arrives after the Viet-Cong have broken off the attack.

#### THE OFFENSE

Taking the offensive is much easier to prescribe than to effect. The guerrillas are always difficult to detect. It is like trying to tell who is a Republican and who is a Democrat by looking at people. There are no apparent differences. The question of surveillance and target identification will be discussed by others later; I only want to point out the difficulty of an aggressive offensive policy. Some-



times there is more importance attached to "offensive type patrols" than there is on the important intelligence work and preparation necessary to successful operations. The opportunities for real success are few and disappear quickly as the guerrillas fade back into the countryside.

### PATROLS

Having remembered the slow rates of march reported in Malaya, I was interested in the rate of march for patrols. I found they varied from a few hundred meters to a few kilometers each day. What is the cause of this? I talked with some of our Special Forces advisors about this problem in great length. In some cases terrain is a problem; trails must be hacked through the jungle. But many of the patrols are carried out in rubber forests, or on paths, and a few kilometers a day is the maximum rate of march. In addition to terrain, there seem to be three factors delaying patrols: weight, communication, and food.

In Infantry School we are told that the average American soldier weighs 180 pounds and a full field pack with rations for ten days weighs about 65 pounds. This means he is carrying 36 per cent of his weight. My mountain climbing friends are lighter--about 160 pounds, but they never carry more than 25 pounds. However, the Vietnamese officers told me that their men carry as much as 80 pounds per man. This is 75 per cent of his weight. These ratios are summarized on Chart 4. One of the reasons for short range and slow

speed now becomes obvious. The Viet-Cong, on the other hand, may be carrying only ten to fifteen pounds--some rice, a weapon, and ammunition. Where does all of the weight come from? First, these are completely foot marches--there is no motor escort. The American Army depends on vehicles to haul supplies, radios, and other gear--in Viet-Nam these must be carried. The ARVN (Army, Republic of Viet-Nam) pack radio, the AN/GRC-87, weighs about 110 pounds and must be divided up by patrol members and carried in addition to their own equipment. Their rifle weighs ten pounds, and ammunition as much. One patrol was carrying 81 mm mortars and ammunition. All of these add to weight. In order to sustain operations in remote areas, weight must be avoided, just as in mountain climbing.

Communications is another source of delay. Unless there is communication with aircraft, communications must be handled by HF radio with the inevitable long and bulky antenna. Putting this antenna up and taking it down costs time. The best time I saw for erection was about 30 minutes. With several contacts daily, this time can add up.

Food is another problem. Tom Thayer, one of the ARPA researchers, pointed out to me that it takes as long as 50 minutes to cook rice. Being accustomed to a modern stove and Minute Rice, I didn't realize that rice in Viet-Nam is not processed and hence takes a long time to cook. All of this cooking takes time. Instant rice, or some acceptable substitute, would be a help. I also noticed that rice is one of the heaviest foods for its food value, roughly 1600 calories per pound.

	<u>Average Weight</u>	<u>Load</u>	<u>Load/Weight Ratio</u>
Mountain climbers	160	25	.15
U.S. Infantry	180	65	.36
Vietnamese Infantry	110	80	.73

Chart 4--Loads for foot marches

(Peanut butter, for example, contains 2800 calories per pound.)

When Vietnamese officers visit me in Los Angeles I always ask them if they have used instant rice, and if not, show them an example of this American innovation.

#### VIET-CONG RESPONSES

I must pause and give credit to the Viet-Cong's operations analysis effort. They may not have an organized effort, but it functions well nonetheless. The U.S. developed an ambush protection unit for convoy vehicles. The Viet-Cong countered by ambushing in villages. One province speeded up their response to Viet-Cong attacks. The Viet-Cong decreased the time of their attacks, always being a little less than the response time of the frustrated province chief. A defoliation program was tried using weed killing compounds harmless to humans. The Viet-Cong blamed all sickness and death on this chemical spray, and the people, not being chemists by training, believed them. The Viet-Cong was being hit by airborne operations. They implanted sharpened bamboo spikes in available drop zones. Helicopter landings became common. The Viet-Cong placed bamboo poles in the landing zones to damage the rotors.

I mention these items because the Viet-Cong organization is quite adaptive. I hope we don't underestimate this capability.

#### AMERICAN TECHNOLOGY

As Americans, we are eager to try our developed technology

against the Viet-Cong. We have established formal testing programs, have on-going R&D efforts, and encouraged on-the-spot innovation. But there are three danger signals I want to raise.

First, the Vietnamese are afraid of failure. We accept the inevitable failures of any R&D effort and realize that this is part of the learning process. The Vietnamese, however, do not accept failure well. Failure means loss of face, and face is important to the Oriental. Before an item is tested in Viet-Nam we should have tested it as much as practicable in other areas, such as Panama, so that the risk of failure is minimized.

Second, before we test equipment we should be able to explain to the Vietnamese whether they will receive the item, if successful, and when. Some of Mr. Nhu's complaints about the Americans using Viet-Nam as a testing ground for our equipment--with the loss of Vietnamese lives--may stem from the Vietnamese feeling they would immediately receive any item which proves successful. The development cycle is a long one, and the Vietnamese should be given an honest answer as to when items will be available. If we have no intention of giving equipment to the Vietnamese, we should say so, or at least tell them to expect a long delay because of "further development."

Third, the use of any sophisticated equipment requires that qualified personnel be diverted from other duties. Before we install elaborate equipment installations we should have a definite no answer to the question, "Can these men be better used somewhere else?" Although there is manpower available in Viet-Nam, skilled and trained personnel are precious resources, and we should carefully consider our demands on this resource.

### SOME PREDICTIONS

Asians are painfully aware of the U.S. reaction to the 7th of December 1941 and to being pushed down Korea from the Yalu, and are hesitant about arousing American might. This may explain their early reluctance to cause American casualties. However, after the first few Americans were killed, the Viet-Cong found little adverse reaction in the U.S. press, and have continued to kill Americans, but have not gone into a special effort to kill U S. advisors. As soon as the Viet-Cong feel that increasing U.S. casualties will cause a "let's get out of Viet-Nam" attitude on the part of the U.S. public, I predict that American casualties will increase as the Viet-Cong concentrate on assassinating American advisors.

The strategic hamlet program represents a threat to the Viet-Cong. They cannot attack the hamlet without the appearance of an attack on the people they say they are helping. One avenue available is to step up attacks on military installations and convoys, and increase their activity in the cities. Unless they succeed in their attempts to subvert the hamlets, there should be stepped-up attacks against this type of targets.

The anti-Diem campaign is helping the Viet-Cong in two areas. First, it is gaining the support of some of the Vietnamese who do not like the Diem regime or who believe the charges of American colonialism. Second, it encourages the U.S. to reduce support of the effort in Viet-Nam as an expression of disapproval of the Diem government. The U.S. press does not particularly like the Diem regime and thus gives the anti-Diem element a platform in front of the American public.

This will be exploited by the Viet-Cong if possible.

The U.S. will continue to support Diem--there is no obvious alternative--but we can encourage Diem to change and can reduce the number of Americans to prevent further effective use of American colonialism as an issue by the Viet-Cong.\*

A decision point is being reached in Laos. With the imminent fall of the neutralist government, Communist forces will be on Viet-Nam's border. The trickle of support now flowing across the border, generally only cadre, may turn into a flood. Ho-Chi-Minh has problems in North Viet-Nam. He urgently needs the agricultural capability of South Viet-Nam. So far the Viet-Cong have been unable to hold any land area in South Viet-Nam long enough to establish a dissident government. Such action would move the question of insurgency into international councils, and the Communists have a precedent of winning there. I believe that Ho-Chi-Minh will escalate the conflict, that is, give full support to the Viet-Cong. He may be misjudging the U.S. resolve. The old question of whether we strike bases in Laos, initiate guerrilla warfare in North Viet-Nam, attempt to seal off the border or withdraw, will no longer be academic, but real. We should be prepared to make this decision and follow through with appropriate action.

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\*Since this presentation there have been riots in Hue and Saigon between the Buddhists and the government. Since 80 per cent of the Vietnamese population is Buddhist this immediately suggests a Buddhist to head the government. I asked Bernard Fall if there were Buddhists capable of leading the country. He said yes and named two.